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Twelfth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since the last report of the Secretary-General was issued on 2 November 2009 (S/2009/566).

2. I am pleased to report that since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), the situation between Lebanon and Israel remains stable, with no overt confrontation or conflict, even if there remains a degree of tension. Yet, although all parties remain committed to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), they have not so far progressed from the current state of cessation of hostilities to a permanent ceasefire, as called for in the resolution.

3. Overall, the situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained stable during the reporting period and the cessation of hostilities continued to hold. There were nevertheless some violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and no discernible progress was achieved during the reporting period in the implementation of key aspects of the resolution.

4. In Lebanon, further to the parliamentary elections of 7 June 2009 and the consultations that ensued, a new Government of National Unity, headed by Saad Hariri as Prime Minister, was eventually formed on 9 November by means of a decree signed jointly by the Prime Minister and the President, Michel Sleiman. Parliament expressed its confidence in the new Government and its programme on 10 December with 122 votes, out of a total of 128 members of parliament.

5. The meetings held between the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Bashar al-Assad, and Prime Minister Hariri in Damascus on 19 and 20 December marked an important milestone in the normalization of relations between the two countries. Senior Lebanese and Syrian officials informed my Special Coordinator that those relations would be based on mutual respect for their sovereignty. It was reported that the two leaders discussed a number of issues pertaining to bilateral relations, some of which have a bearing on Lebanon's obligations under resolution 1701 (2006).

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II. Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

6. Since my last report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) was issued, Lebanon's security agencies have continued to coordinate their investigations of alleged Israeli spying networks in Lebanon and, according to Government sources, have made at least one further arrest in this connection.

A. Situation in the UNIFIL area of operations

7. The situation in the area of operations remained generally quiet. The Governments of Lebanon and Israel maintained their commitment to the cessation of hostilities and the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

8. The Israel Defense Forces continued their occupation of the northern part of Ghajar village and an adjacent area of land north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). Since November 2009, a number of discussions have taken place between UNIFIL and the Israeli authorities on the UNIFIL proposal to facilitate the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the area (see S/2009/566, para. 15). In parallel, the new Government of Lebanon was reviewing the proposal as UNIFIL resumed discussions with its Lebanese counterparts.

9. Almost daily intrusions into Lebanese airspace by Israeli aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles continued. The Israeli overflights were conducted at a somewhat reduced level in November and December but were followed by a marked increase in the second half of the reporting period. All Israeli overflights of Lebanese territory constitute violations of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL protested at all air violations and asked Israel to cease them immediately. Overflights inherently escalate tensions and increase the possibility of security incidents, as demonstrated on a few occasions when the Lebanese Armed Forces opened fire on Israeli aircraft intruding in Lebanese airspace. The Government of Lebanon also protested against the air violations and demanded that they stop without delay. The Government of Israel maintained that the overflights are necessary security measures, citing alleged lack of enforcement of the arms embargo.

10. On 26 December 2009, a UNIFIL night patrol south of Khiam (Sector East), after observing several men behaving suspiciously, discovered 250 kilograms of explosives. The Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL inspected the explosives before the Lebanese Armed Forces confiscated them for further investigation. The investigation is ongoing. On 7 January 2010 the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me, expressed the belief of her Government that the types of explosives and manner in which they were deployed demonstrated that Hizbullah operatives had planted the explosives. The presence of unauthorized explosives in the area constitutes a violation of resolution 1701 (2006).

11. On 31 January, the Israel Defense Forces apprehended a Lebanese shepherd in the vicinity of United Nations position 4-34 in the Shab'a farms area. Owing to the lack of evidence on the ground and contradictory statements from the parties, the UNIFIL investigation was not able to determine the exact location of the incident and, consequently, remained inconclusive as to the nature of the Blue Line violation. In the early morning hours of 1 February, the shepherd was handed over to UNIFIL.

who, in turn, handed him over to Lebanese authorities. On 1 and 2 February, the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations, in identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me, conveyed his Government's protest of what was termed the kidnapping of a Lebanese citizen by an Israeli patrol on Lebanese territory, that is, north of the Blue Line. On 22 January, two persons approached the wire fence surrounding Ghajar on the northern side from inside the village. Despite UNIFIL cautioning them and firing a warning shot, one of the individuals threw a bag across the fence and crossed the fence, managing to flee. The second individual withdrew into Ghajar village. A small number of minor ground violations of the Blue Line also occurred, mainly by farmers tending livestock or working in their fields, which straddle the Blue Line. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces troops in close proximity to the Blue Line continued to warn the local population of the position of the Line in an effort to prevent inadvertent violations.

12. On several occasions, UNIFIL observed civilians close to the Blue Line throwing stones at the Israeli technical fence. To prevent such incidents, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces increased their presence in places where the stone throwing occurred. In addition, at times, verbal abuse and threatening gestures were exchanged between the two sides across the Blue Line, involving both military personnel and civilians.

13. UNIFIL completed its investigations into the incident that occurred on 12 October 2009 in Tayr Falsay (Sector West), the two explosions that happened on 17 and 18 October in an area between Houla and Meiss el-Jebel (Sector East), and the rocket launch on 27 October from the general area of Houla (Sector East). The conclusions of the investigations confirmed the preliminary findings outlined in my last report (S/2009/566, paras. 13, 14 and 9, respectively). The UNIFIL investigation into the explosions near Houla was not able to determine when the Israel Defense Forces device was installed, nor how it was activated. Investigations by the Lebanese authorities are still under way into the seven rocket launching incidents between June 2007 and October 2009.

14. Good progress is being made on visibly marking the Blue Line, with small delays primarily due to inclement weather. In the current four sectors of the project, totalling 36.5 kilometres, 69 coordinates have been agreed; 40 markers have been installed (including one that was marked unilaterally by UNIFIL, with the agreement of the parties); 23 are under construction; and the coordinates of seven points are set to be measured on the ground with the parties. UNIFIL submitted to the parties a proposal for a fifth sector to be marked. Both parties restated the importance that they attach to the marking project, which is also underlined by the inadvertent crossings mentioned above (para. 11), and expressed their commitment to maintaining the momentum. UNIFIL demining teams support the project by clearing minefields and unexploded ordnance to allow access for measuring coordinates and construction of Blue Line markers.

15. Construction work on the first stage of the Blue Line road project, in which existing roads in the vicinity of the Blue Line are being linked by constructing 11 road connections, is ongoing, with UNIFIL engineering assets providing support to the Lebanese Armed Forces. To date, two links have been completed and a third is under construction.

16. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces maintained their respective installations and continued their daily operational activities, including UNIFIL helicopter patrols, at the same high levels of the previous reporting period. The two forces continued operating co-located checkpoints on the Litani River, as well as others at randomly selected locations in the area of operations. In addition, the two forces carried out an average of 15 counter-rocket-launching operations during each 24-hour period and daily coordinated foot patrols along the Blue Line. Efforts continued to further enhance the efficiency of the activities coordinated between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces. These included the review of the conduct of counter-rocket-launching operations, with a view to strengthening preventive measures and joint operational procedures between the two forces aimed at harmonizing the planning and execution of operational activities.

17. In response to occasional heightened security alerts, the two forces intensified their cooperation and coordinated activities. This included increased troop presence in sensitive parts of the area of operations, as well as intensified counter-rocket-launching activities. The Lebanese Armed Forces also increased the number of physical checks of vehicles and search rates during these periods of heightened tension. The transformation of all three Lebanese Armed Forces brigades from light to heavy has now been completed, and the Lebanese Armed Forces deployment in the UNIFIL area of operations comprises three heavy brigades, whose full strength is 6,400 troops.

18. During the reporting period, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces conducted a considerable number of exercises, mostly tactical, involving both forces. In addition, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces land and maritime forces were involved in an amphibious and an artillery exercise. Ongoing UNIFIL engagement in civil-military training courses for the Lebanese Armed Forces, followed by an on-the-job phase with a UNIFIL contingent, further enhanced the UNIFIL-Lebanese Armed Forces partnership. The Maritime Task Force also continued to provide regular training to the Lebanese naval forces at sea and on land.

19. The ongoing UNIFIL-Lebanese Armed Forces joint training and exercises contribute to enhancing the capacities of the Lebanese Army. Nevertheless, in order for the Lebanese Armed Forces to gradually assume greater security responsibility in the UNIFIL area of operations and the Lebanese territorial waters, it is essential for the Lebanese Armed Forces land and naval components to receive critically required equipment and technical support.

20. With minor exceptions, UNIFIL continued to exercise full freedom of movement throughout its area of operations, carrying out more than 10,000 patrols each month. A handful of the patrols were temporarily stopped by local civilians. Those incidents were brief and were resolved on the ground with the assistance of the Lebanese Armed Forces. In one serious incident on 23 January, a group of civilians temporarily obstructed the movement of a UNIFIL foot patrol in the area of Bint Jbeil (Sector West). The patrol leader asked three civilians to delete photographs that they had taken of the patrol and noted their vehicle's licence plate number when they refused to do so. Subsequently, the civilians mobilized a crowd of around 50 persons, some carrying baseball bats and steel bars and one armed with a knife, who blocked the patrol's movement. UNIFIL personnel fired three warning shots into the air, at which point the civilians moved back some metres and, after

further discussions, dispersed. A Lebanese Armed Forces patrol arrived at the scene and calmed the situation. No injuries resulted from the incident and the patrol resumed its activity. In addition, UNIFIL activities were monitored on occasion by civilians in various areas.

21. There were a number of instances when Lebanese civilians, mostly youths, threw stones at UNIFIL patrols. On 9 January, in the vicinity of Dayr Qanun an-Nahr, a group of civilians threw stones at UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces, causing damage to a number of vehicles. This incident occurred in the aftermath of an accident that resulted in the death of one civilian when two pieces of UNIFIL artillery equipment fell off Lebanese Armed Forces lorries. Lebanese Armed Forces calmed the situation. On another occasion, a group of three youngsters threw a piece of steel at a UNIFIL patrol, injuring a soldier.

22. With the exception of the incidents detailed above, the attitude of the local population towards UNIFIL continued to be positive as UNIFIL Civil Military Cooperation and Civil Affairs units maintained close contacts with local communities. The provision of humanitarian, infrastructural, capacity-building and vocational training support through the activities of troop-contributing countries and projects funded from the UNIFIL budget continued to strengthen the relations between UNIFIL and the population. Local authorities expressed some concern about road and property damage resulting from UNIFIL operational activities.

23. UNIFIL continued to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in establishing an area between the Blue Line and the Litani River free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL, in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006). The Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL continued to take intensive and coordinated measures, as described above, specifically aimed at ensuring that there are no armed elements in the area, discovering and removing all weapons and related materiel that may still be present, and preventing the possible smuggling of weapons across the Litani River.

24. The Government of Israel maintains that Hizbullah is continuing to build its military presence and capacity, largely north of the Litani River, but also inside the UNIFIL area of operations using, in particular, private houses in urban areas. In cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, UNIFIL immediately investigates any claims regarding the illegal presence of armed personnel or weapons in the area if specific information is received. However, according to its mandate, UNIFIL cannot search private houses and properties unless there is credible evidence of a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), including an imminent threat of hostile activity emanating from that specific location. The Lebanese Armed Forces Command reconfirmed that it will act immediately on receiving evidence of unauthorized armed personnel or weapons in the area and put a stop to any illegal activity in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006) and relevant Government decisions concerning the illegal presence of armed personnel and weapons south of the Litani River. To date, UNIFIL has neither been provided with, nor found, evidence of the smuggling of arms into its area of operations. Furthermore, UNIFIL routinely checked previously discovered former facilities of armed elements in the area of operations, including bunkers and caves, but did not find indications that they had been reactivated or any evidence of new military infrastructure in its area of operations.

25. As stated in earlier reports, establishing an area free of unauthorized weapons is a long-term endeavour. The rocket attack of 27 October (see S/2009/566, para. 9) again demonstrated that there continue to be weapons and hostile armed elements ready to use them within the UNIFIL area of operations. The discovery of a significant amount of explosives south of Khiam on 26 December is also an indication of the presence of unauthorized explosives and assets in the area of operations. This highlights the need for UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces to remain focused on further enhancing security control in the area.

26. On numerous occasions, UNIFIL encountered civilians armed with hunting rifles in the area of operations, despite the Government ban on hunting and the carrying of weapons inside the area, which the Government reissued late in October 2009. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued to remind the local population of the ban. Although the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested numerous individuals and confiscated their weapons, some managed to flee. In addition, armed persons and weapons are present inside the Palestinian refugee camps in the area.

27. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force continued to conduct maritime interdiction operations in the area of maritime operations, as well as training of the Lebanese naval forces. The Lebanese navy contributed by hailing vessels approaching Lebanese ports while the Lebanese Coastal Radar Organization successfully contributed to compiling a recognized maritime surface picture of the Lebanese territorial waters. However, the Lebanese navy remains significantly restricted in its operations as a result of the lack of vessels capable of staying at sea during unfavourable weather conditions and for prolonged periods. This lack of assets restricts the Lebanese navy's further development, including an expansion of its participation in maritime interdiction operations. Since the start of its mission in October 2006, the Maritime Task Force has hailed and queried over 27,600 ships. Since my last report, 87 additional inspections were carried out on vessels identified as suspicious, increasing the total number to 477 since the inception of the Maritime Task Force. Of these, the Lebanese navy initiated 29, the Maritime Task Force itself initiating the remaining 67. Lebanese navy and Customs officials inspected the vessels to verify that there were no unauthorized arms or related materiel on board and cleared all of them.

28. On three occasions during the reporting period, the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force responded to requests to assist in search and rescue operations. On 11 and 17 December 2009, the Maritime Task Force, in close coordination and cooperation with the Lebanese navy and the Cyprus Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre, conducted two search and rescue operations for vessels that capsized during severe weather conditions. On 11 December, in response to a distress call from a merchant vessel outside the UNIFIL area of maritime operations, approximately opposite Tyre, UNIFIL sent the Maritime Task Force vessel which was operating closest to the location to the site of the incident. UNIFIL Maritime Task Force personnel rescued one person; five others were rescued by the Israel Defense Forces navy. Between 17 and 20 December, the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force again conducted search and rescue operations for crew members of a capsized vessel in the waters opposite Tripoli harbour. The Task Force provided the on-scene command for the operation, which also involved Lebanese naval assets. Task Force vessels rescued 34 survivors; six additional survivors were rescued by the Lebanese Armed Forces and other participants in the operation. Following the crash of an aircraft on 25 January shortly after take-off from the international airport in Beirut, UNIFIL Maritime Task

Force units provided critical support to the Lebanese authorities in the search and rescue operations, which lasted 72 hours. Initially, the Task Force commanded and coordinated the operations on scene.

29. Incidents along the line of buoys continued several times per week. Israel Defense Forces navy units frequently dropped depth charges and fired flares and warning shots along the line of buoys. The Israel Defense Forces stated that these were security measures against Lebanese fishing vessels approaching or crossing the line of buoys. While UNIFIL has no mandate to monitor the line of buoys, which the Government of Israel installed unilaterally and which the Government of Lebanon does not recognize, the issue has been raised in the tripartite forum, and the Force Commander has expressed his concern that the incidents contribute to increasing tension between the parties.

B. Security and liaison arrangements

30. The tripartite meetings, chaired by the Force Commander with senior representatives of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces, continued to serve as an indispensable instrument of UNIFIL liaison and coordination and an essential tool to address security and military operational issues and build confidence between the parties. Violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and other incidents were discussed at the meetings, as were the UNIFIL investigation reports on the Tayr Falsay incident, the Houla explosions, and the rocket launches of 11 September and 27 October. Both parties continued to demonstrate a constructive and flexible approach to the resolution of outstanding issues. This approach led to practical solutions to a number of contentious issues, most notably in respect of the road construction works in Kafr Kila (Sector East) and the cultivation of olive orchards south of the Blue Line by Lebanese farmers in Blida (Sector East). The parties reiterated their commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the significance of the tripartite meetings in enhancing security and stability. The parties continued to utilize the tripartite mechanism to constructively address military and security issues under discussion.

31. Regular interaction between UNIFIL and Lebanese Armed Forces senior command ensured a well-coordinated strategic approach to the activities of the two forces. Daily liaison at various levels remained close, facilitating efficient coordination at the operational and tactical levels. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintained liaison officers at UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura and at Sector headquarters, while UNIFIL continued to have a liaison officer stationed with Lebanese Armed Forces headquarters southern Lebanon, in Tyre.

32. Coordination and liaison with the Israel Defense Forces remained efficient. The UNIFIL Force Commander maintained effective relations with his Israel Defense Forces counterparts, as well as with other senior Israeli authorities. UNIFIL continued to have two liaison officers at the Israel Defense Forces Northern Command headquarters in Zefat. No progress has been made during the reporting period on the establishment of the UNIFIL office in Tel Aviv.

C. Disarming armed groups

33. In the aftermath of the discovery by UNIFIL of 250 kilograms of explosives in UNIFIL Sector East, near Khiam, the Government of Israel, in the letter dated 7 January from its Permanent Representative to the United Nations referred to above (para. 10), reiterated its position concerning Hizbullah's armament, military presence and capacity in Lebanon. It also asserted that the explosives were possibly industrially produced in Iran (Islamic Republic of) or the Syrian Arab Republic, and noted that it regarded the Government of Lebanon as fully responsible for all such violations and any resulting implications.

34. As reported previously, Hizbullah continues to maintain a substantial military capacity distinct from that of the Lebanese State, in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). In interviews and statements issued during the reporting period, Hizbullah leaders continued to declare publicly that Hizbullah will use its arsenal to defend itself if attacked. Hizbullah leaders maintain that Hizbullah continues to abide by the requirements of resolution 1701 (2006) and deny allegations that Hizbullah has transferred weapons south of the Litani River.

35. The issue of Hizbullah's weapons became a major point of debate in the preparation of the Lebanese Government's ministerial statement. In the final version, the Government of Lebanon asserts "the right of Lebanon, through its people, army and resistance, to liberate or recover the Shab'a Farms, Kfarshouba Hills and the Lebanese part of the occupied village of Ghajar and to defend Lebanon against any assault and safeguard its right to its water resources, by all legitimate and available means". The ministerial statement also reaffirms the Government's "commitment to Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) with all its clauses". In this context, I note that the Security Council in resolution 1701 (2006) called for the full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords, and of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so that, pursuant to the Lebanese Cabinet decision of 27 July 2006, there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State.

36. I continue to believe that the disarmament of Hizbullah and other militias should take place through a Lebanese-led political process. In this connection, Lebanon's leaders had mandated the National Dialogue, under President Sleiman's leadership, to agree on a national defence strategy. The National Dialogue has not yet reconvened since the parliamentary elections were held on 7 June 2009. President Sleiman has conveyed to my Special Coordinator his intention to reconvene the National Dialogue soon.

37. The presence of Palestinian and other armed groups continues to pose a threat to the stability of Lebanon and challenges Lebanese sovereignty. I continue to be concerned about the maintenance of paramilitary infrastructure on Lebanese territory by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada, as it encroaches on Lebanese sovereignty. The fact that some of those military bases straddle the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic poses an added challenge for the control of the border. I have called upon the Government of Lebanon to dismantle those bases and on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with these efforts. On 17 January 2010, Fatah al-Intifada's Secretary-General, Abu Musa, who visited Lebanon for the first time in

28 years, publicly rejected any attempt to dismantle the Palestinian military bases along the Lebanese-Syrian border and in Naameh, south of Beirut. The statement of the leader of Fatah al-Intifada triggered strong reactions from Lebanese officials, who described it as a challenge to the Government of Lebanon and the decisions taken in the National Dialogue. The Lebanese Cabinet reaffirmed that Lebanon's sovereignty was non-negotiable and that no Palestinian arms should be outside the camps. Two days later, Abu Musa clarified that his group was ready to engage in a dialogue to reach agreement on Palestinian arms outside the camp with the Lebanese Government or State. In this context, it is also worth highlighting that, in its ministerial statement, the new Government stressed "the need to implement the points agreed upon during the National Dialogue, to eliminate Palestinian weapons outside the camps and deal with the issues relating to security and arms inside the camps". This refers to decisions taken earlier in the National Dialogue process in 2006.

38. On 15 February clashes between members of Fatah and members of radical Islamist movements broke out in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain el-Hilweh, near Saida. One person was killed as a result of the fighting before calm was restored to the camp. This incident disrupted an otherwise generally calm situation in the camps. Lebanese authorities have continued to welcome cooperation arrangements with Palestinian authorities on security issues in the camps. On 26 December 2009, a bomb exploded in a facility used by Hamas and located in the southern Beirut suburb of Haret Hraik. At least two men identified as bodyguards of Osama Hamdan, a representative of the Hamas political bureau, were killed in the incident. While the investigation by the Lebanese authorities is still ongoing, security sources have indicated that the explosion was caused by an accident.

D. Arms embargo

39. One of the important provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) is that the Government of Lebanon secure its borders and other entry into points so as to prevent the entry into Lebanon without its consent of arms or related material. In the resolution, the Security Council further decided that all States were to prevent the sale or supply of arms and related material to entities or individuals in Lebanon by their nationals or from their territories or using their flag vessels or aircraft. The Government of Lebanon has not reported any breach of the arms embargo imposed by resolution 1701 (2006) during the reporting period. Government officials nevertheless acknowledged the porous nature of the border and the possibility that arms smuggling occurs. During my Special Coordinator's visit to Israel on 24 and 25 January, the Government of Israel reiterated its assertions of significant breaches of the arms embargo across the border between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. The United Nations takes these assertions seriously but is not in a position to verify this information independently.

40. The effective management of the borders of Lebanon continues to be affected by the lack of demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic and by the continued presence of Palestinian military bases which straddle the border between the two countries. During the reporting period, the Government of Lebanon continued to make efforts to improve the control over its borders. According to Lebanese officials, bilateral cooperation between the security agencies of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic has improved during the reporting period.

focusing on curbing security threats affecting both countries. Lebanese and Syrian officials have confirmed to my Special Coordinator that the two States have agreed to start addressing the question of management of their common border within a comprehensive framework of bilateral cooperation.

41. The Common Border Force, comprising some 700 staff from four Lebanese security agencies (Armed Forces, Internal Security Forces, General Security and Customs), pursued its operations along the northern border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Lebanese authorities reported the seizure by the Common Border Force of some commercial goods being smuggled into Lebanon.

42. The Lebanese Armed Forces have deployed approximately 500 troops to ensure control of the next stretch of the border to the east, up from 350 troops in the reporting period. The Internal Security Forces also increased their numbers in this area, from 100 to 200, and placed them under a single united command, led by a Lebanese Armed Forces General. These 700 troops will be part of the future Common Border Force II, which will come into existence once General Security and Customs also assign personnel to it. In order to become fully operational, the Common Border Force II will require equipment and the realization of necessary infrastructure works in its area of responsibility, for which the Government has requested assistance from the international community.

43. On 2 February, Ambassadors from donor countries, led by my Special Coordinator, met Prime Minister Hariri, who was accompanied by five members of his Cabinet, to reiterate the support of the international community for Lebanon's border management initiatives and to request that current efforts be developed into a broader strategy for border management, to be adopted by the Government. The Prime Minister welcomed this suggestion and undertook to appoint a senior official to coordinate Government action to oversee a comprehensive border strategy.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

44. The Lebanese Mine Action Centre continues to coordinate all humanitarian clearance operations in southern Lebanon from its Regional Mine Action Centre in Nabatiye. The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre maintains a liaison and quality assurance function between UNIFIL and the Regional Centre.

45. The Regional Mine Action Centre in Nabatiye has completed its field assessment of the technical strike data received from Israel for the area south of the Litani River. Of the 116 potential strike locations south of the Litani, 26 have been confirmed as contaminated strike locations, bringing the total number of locations identified to date to 1,113. The Lebanese Armed Forces have given authorization in general for future clearance operations of the landmines north of the road currently being built along the Blue Line.

46. During the reporting period, two incidents occurred involving unexploded ordnance from the 2006 conflict, including cluster munitions, and resulting in two injuries. The incidents bring the total number of fatalities and injuries among civilians since the end of the conflict to 28 and 248, respectively, and among demining personnel resulting from clearance activities since August 2006 to 59, with 14 fatalities and 45 injuries.

F. Delineation of borders

47. Following the meetings between the President of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Prime Minister of Lebanon in Damascus on 19 and 20 December 2009, preparations have been undertaken to resume bilateral discussions on the delineation and demarcation of the common border through the work of the Lebanese-Syrian committee that Presidents Al-Assad and Sleiman decided to reactivate at their summit in August 2008. The final determination of the border would be important for its management and for the maintenance of good-neighbourliness between the two countries, in fulfilment of resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006).

48. There continues to be no progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. In spite of my repeated requests, I have not received any responses from the Syrian Arab Republic or Israel to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), issued on 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641). I encourage them to submit such reactions to the United Nations Secretariat. During my Special Coordinator's visit to Damascus on 18 February, Syrian officials reiterated to him that the Syrian Arab Republic considers the Farms to be Lebanese.

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

49. The safety and security of UNIFIL staff remains a priority. Notwithstanding the obligation of all parties to ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL and the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon for maintaining law and order, UNIFIL continued to focus on mitigating risks to its personnel, assets and installations while ensuring implementation of its mandate. UNIFIL and the Lebanese authorities and Lebanese Armed Forces maintain cooperation and joint efforts to ensure that security threats to UNIFIL, which the mission received on a number of occasions during the reporting period, are addressed appropriately. In addition to electronic countermeasures to jam explosive devices, UNIFIL can rely on micro-unmanned aerial vehicles as a critical risk-mitigating asset to be utilized at the discretion of the Force Commander to enhance Force protection and civilian staff security.

50. In November 2009, the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested a militant who allegedly has been linked to the rocket attacks of January and February 2009, which were launched from the UNIFIL area of operations. He had already been sentenced in absentia for the attack near Saida in January 2008. The individual will be retried for that attack and is also scheduled to appear in the military court in connection with several other cases. The case of the attack on UNIFIL on 24 June 2007, in which six peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent were killed, remains with the preliminary investigative judge in the military court.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

51. As at 15 January 2010, the total military strength of UNIFIL was 11,658, of whom 489 were women. The mission has 319 international and 660 national civilian staff members, of whom 87 and 169, respectively, are women. UNIFIL is also supported by 53 United Nations Truce Supervision Organization military observers of the Observer Group Lebanon, of whom four are women. As previously foreseen, the multirole logistics company from Denmark arrived and, starting in December, succeeded the Polish logistics and maintenance company. The withdrawal of the Polish contingent was completed by mid-December. An additional Indonesian company deployed in UNIFIL late in October, while a Nepalese company is now expected in the second half of April 2010. In addition, nine paramedics from Indonesia deployed to UNIFIL as part of the process of upgrading the UNIFIL hospital at the Naqoura headquarters from Level 1 to Level 2. The Government of Belgium informed the Department of Peacekeeping Operations that it will withdraw its construction engineer assets by the end of February 2010.

52. On 30 November, Italy assumed command of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force from Germany. The Maritime Task Force continued to operate at a reduced strength of six to seven vessels, with a composition of one to two frigates, one corvette, three fast patrol boats and one supply vessel, complemented by two helicopters. This strength is considered less than sufficient, particularly during periods of bad weather when only the larger vessels can remain at sea. With the expected arrival of a frigate and a patrol boat from Bangladesh late in April, the Maritime Task Force will be augmented with critically required capacities.

53. Further to my previous report (S/2009/566, para. 58), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNIFIL completed a joint review of the operational capacity of UNIFIL, including its force structure, assets and requirements, on land and at sea. The conclusions of the review were conveyed to the Security Council in my letter of 16 February 2010 (see S/2010/86).

54. On 28 January the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Lieutenant General Claudio Graziano, handed over the command of UNIFIL to Major General Alberto Asarta Cuevas of Spain.

V. Observations

55. I am pleased to report that, three and a half years after the Security Council adopted resolution 1701 (2006), the parties maintain their commitment to it. The continued respect of the cessation of hostilities by Israel and Lebanon has provided for the most stable period in the relationship between the two countries for decades. Yet the situation remains fragile. This fragility is further compounded by the use of increasingly strident and bellicose rhetoric warning of renewed conflict, the expanded nature of any renewed confrontation, and the application of the military lessons that both sides have learned from the 2006 conflict. All such rhetoric raises tensions and should be avoided. It also contravenes the spirit of resolution 1701 (2006).

56. While I am pleased that the parties maintained their commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) and the cessation of hostilities, more work remains to be done in implementing the outstanding elements of the resolution. The new strategic environment and the relative stability prevailing in southern Lebanon that UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has helped to establish, together with the favourable conditions prevailing in the country as a whole, can form the foundation for a process towards achieving a permanent ceasefire. As I have stated in previous reports, the opportunity that the UNIFIL presence has created cannot be maintained indefinitely. It is the responsibility of the parties to focus on all outstanding issues in order to reach a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution as envisaged in resolution 1701 (2006). A permanent ceasefire would assist in further stabilizing the situation by providing for a defined set of obligations of each party and establishing a stable mechanism to monitor compliance by the parties with the agreement and address potential violations through dialogue, rather than force, thus lessening the threat of an unwanted military escalation. I urge the parties to seize the opportunity to make tangible progress in the coming months. The United Nations, through the work of my Special Coordinator for Lebanon and UNIFIL, stands ready to continue to assist the parties towards this objective.

57. I am concerned that the occupation by Israeli forces of the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line continues. The resumption of discussions between UNIFIL and Israeli officials in December 2009 is a positive sign. I call on the Government of Israel, in accordance with its obligations under resolution 1701 (2006), to complete its withdrawal from the area without further delay. UNIFIL stands ready to facilitate the withdrawal.

58. The Israel Defense Forces continue to violate Lebanon's sovereignty and resolution 1701 (2006) on an almost daily basis through overflights of Lebanese territory. These overflights create a tense situation and carry the potential of provoking an incident which could rapidly escalate. I once again call on Israel to respect Lebanon's sovereignty by ceasing immediately all overflights of Lebanese territory.

59. I believe that the election in Lebanon of a new Parliament in June 2009 and the appointment during this reporting period of a Government of National Unity provide new opportunities for Lebanon to tackle the manifold political, security, economic and social challenges facing the country. It is my conviction that implementation of the agenda of reform contained in the ministerial statement will result in a strengthened State that is better able to exercise its sovereignty and authority over its territory, as called for in resolution 1701 (2006). I call on the international community to continue to support the Government of Lebanon.

60. The discovery by UNIFIL of weapons in its area of operations is evidence of a clear violation of resolution 1701 (2006). It underlines the fact that establishing a zone free of unauthorized weapons and armed personnel between the Litani River and the Blue Line, as required by resolution 1701 (2006), remains a long-term endeavour. Furthermore, the United Nations regularly receives reports to the effect that Hizbullah has re-established its arsenal and military capabilities, within and outside the UNIFIL area of operations, a fact not disavowed by Hizbullah with regard to Lebanon north of the Litani River. With regard to the latter assertion, as this is outside the UNIFIL area of operations, the United Nations does not have the means to verify independently this information. Leaders of Hizbullah, however,

have stated publicly that their organization possesses significant military capabilities to be used for defensive purposes.

61. The Lebanese Armed Forces, in partnership with UNIFIL, play a key role in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). They continued to act with strong commitment and resolve, and that capacity has been gradually strengthened with the assistance of international donors. I am grateful to those countries that are helping to equip and train the Lebanese Armed Forces, including the navy, and I urge the international community to continue this critically required support to Lebanese Armed Forces capacity-building. This support is essential if the Lebanese Armed Forces are to be able to assume effective responsibility for security over the area of UNIFIL operations and the maritime entry points into Lebanon in the future.

62. The joint technical review (see S/2010/86) puts forward recommendations to enhance the operational effectiveness of UNIFIL by creating a more task-oriented, mobile and flexible force posture. The review also highlights the need for the formalization of a regular strategic dialogue mechanism between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces to carry out analyses of ground forces and maritime assets, and set a series of benchmarks reflecting the correlation between the capacities and responsibilities of UNIFIL and the capacities of the Lebanese Armed Forces, as well as taking into account the security situation in the area. I support the findings of the technical review and have asked the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNIFIL to proceed with the implementation.

63. Control by Lebanon over its borders is an important obligation under resolution 1701 (2006), the implementation of which requires both political commitment and strengthened capacity. I remain concerned about the ongoing reports that point to breaches of the arms embargo, which would be violations of resolution 1701 (2006). I am encouraged by the efforts that are being gradually undertaken by the Government of Lebanon to control its borders, and in particular by the Prime Minister's commitment to developing a comprehensive border strategy for Lebanon, as called for by the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team. I am grateful to Member States that provide assistance to increase Lebanon's border management capacity and call upon the international community to support implementation of Lebanon's comprehensive border strategy in the future. I believe that the marked improvement of relations between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic creates a propitious environment for progress to be made with regard to the management of their common border, and also its delineation and demarcation. I look forward to concrete steps in this respect to be taken by the Governments of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in coming months.

64. I also intend to continue my diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. I once again call upon Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to submit their responses to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area that I had provided on the basis of the best available information.

65. The presence of armed groups in Lebanon operating outside the control of the State constitutes a challenge to the ability of the State to exercise its full sovereignty and control over its territory in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006) and remains a matter of concern to me. As I have stated before, I believe that the disarmament of armed groups should be carried out through a Lebanese-led political process. I therefore call upon the President of Lebanon to reconvene the National Dialogue to further discussions on a national defence strategy, with a view to forging a national

consensus on this key issue. I also note that the new Government in Lebanon has declared its commitment to implementing decisions taken by the National Dialogue in 2006 and 2009 to disarm Palestinian groups outside the camps, and to address the issue of arms inside the official refugee camps. I call upon the Government of Lebanon to take measures to this effect.

66. The situation of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon remains a subject of concern, including with regard to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). While I commend the cooperation on security matters between Lebanese agencies and Palestinian authorities inside the camps, further progress should be made to improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees. I believe that more efforts need to be made in this respect, whist ensuring the peaceful coexistence of the Lebanese and Palestinian communities and without prejudice to the settlement of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace agreement. I therefore call upon the Government of Lebanon and the donor community to make concerted efforts in addressing the dire socio-economic situation of the Palestinian refugee community as a matter of priority.

67. The situation prevailing between Lebanon and Israel, which is of the utmost relevance to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), is inevitably affected by regional dynamics. While I call upon the parties to continue to work resolutely on the implementation of their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006) and to move towards a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution, I believe that the pace at which progress will be achieved in this respect will be influenced by other regional developments. In particular, the absence of progress on the Middle East peace process has a negative impact on the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and on the stability of Lebanon.

68. I call on both parties to take the necessary steps to achieve what Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) defines as a long-term solution that would govern their relations. The achievement of that solution cannot and should not be dissociated from the need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003). I call upon the parties and upon all Member States to work decisively towards this goal.

69. I would like to express my appreciation to General Graziano for his exemplary leadership and dedicated service in UNIFIL over the past three challenging years. I commend General Graziano for successfully maintaining constructive relations with both the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces. His efforts have contributed to building confidence with the parties and enhancing stability in southern Lebanon. I have full confidence that UNIFIL will continue to carry out its mission effectively under the leadership of General Asarta.